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# LI's Affordable Housing Put on Display

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Standing at the front of a bus full of Long Island's political power brokers, the head of a local housing group preached to his passengers like an evangelist: "Affordable housing is the key to our economic future - and it can be done in an attractive way," he kept saying.

This was the constant message of Jim Morgo, president of the Long Island Housing Partnership, who led the way on what was coined the "Go Take a Look" bus tour - where members of Congress and town supervisors from across the two counties were shown a number of affordable housing developments that were either developed or sponsored by the Hauppauge-based nonprofit group.

"We want to put a face on affordable housing," said Jacqueline O'Garrow, a senior deputy director of Fannie Mae's New York Partnership Office, who also led the group. And as part of this effort, many home owners who bought housing through the partnership came along on the bus ride and spoke to politicians.

"Most business leaders and elected officials have never seen affordable housing developments," Morgo said. "Nor have they met the people who live in them."

Rob Dixon, a graduate from the New York Institute of Technology who now lives in the affordable-housing development of South Wind Village in Islip with his wife and two daughters, told politicians on the bus: "I feel a sense of community living in my own home."

However, Dixon added that his peer group hasn't been so lucky. "All of my friends are talking about leaving Long Island and going South because housing is so expensive."

Indeed, many young people are leaving the Island, the politicians were told. Fannie Mae, quoting census statistics, shows that the number of 20- to 34-year-olds has dropped 20 percent between 1990 and 2000.

Many in the business community are worried, Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington) said yesterday.

Many defense contractors are getting work and are fearful that they can't get workers, because of the high cost of housing. He added that teachers, nurses and other workers "are being priced out of the market."

Reflecting on the tour, Huntington Town Supervisor Frank Petrone said that it was worthwhile.

"Most people would never be able to tell that the houses were affordable," he said, adding that they debunk the stereotype that affordable housing is ugly.

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